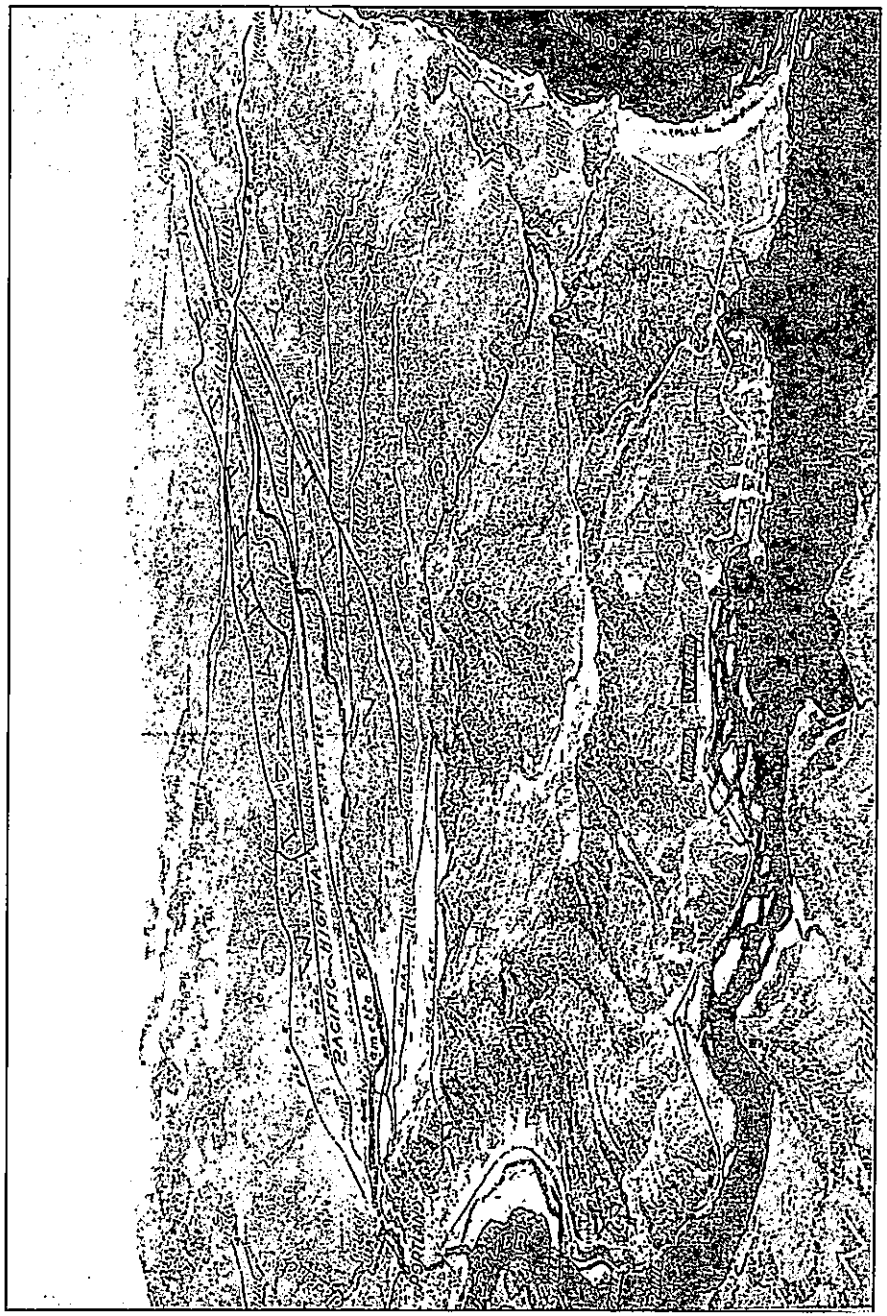
From Pictorial Oregon, The Wonderland, the Portland Press Club, Portland, OR, 1915.



Knappa-Svensen History

By Edith Cook Stangland

Knappa-Svensen has come a long way to the present bustling community of today. Although the two little towns originated some three miles from each other, as time passed, they became a combined community due to school and social activities.

Knappa

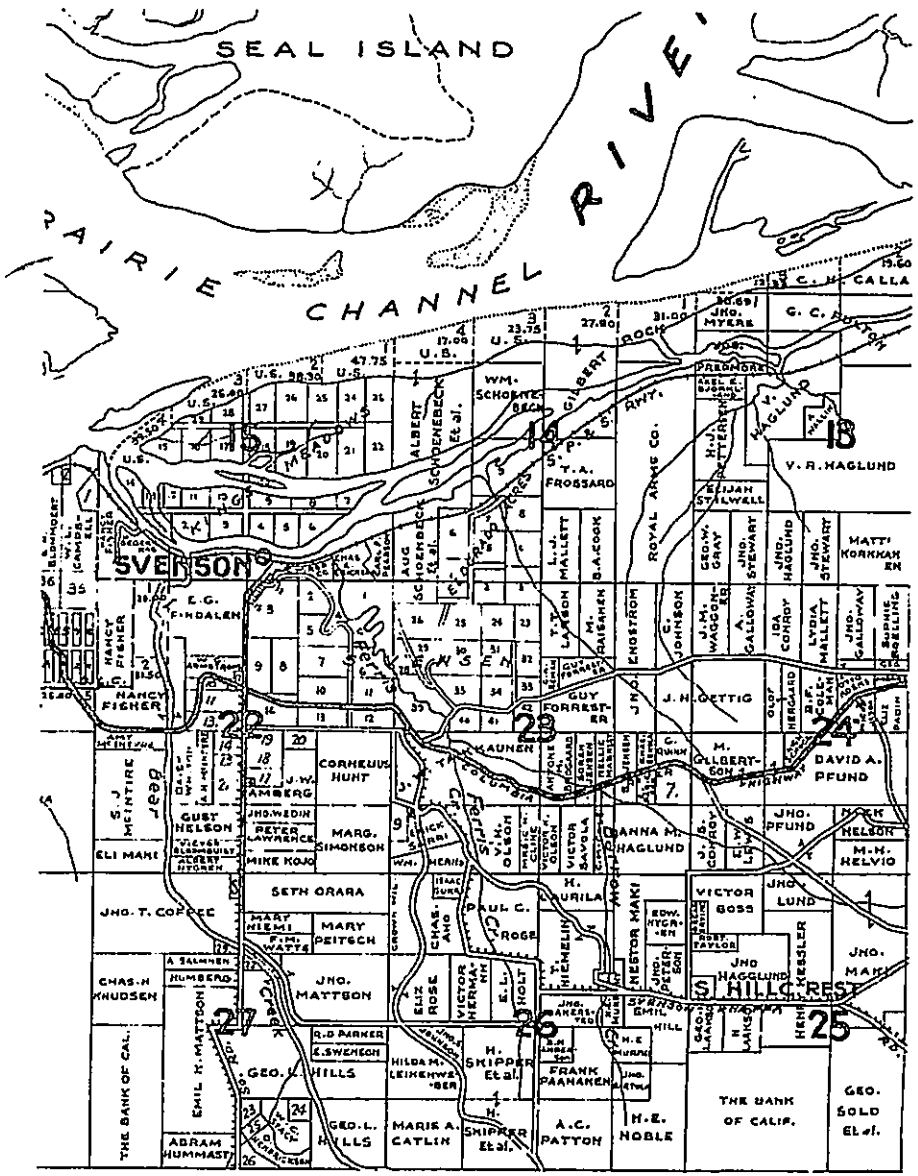
The little town of Knappa was named for Auren Knapp Jr., a pioneer settler and long-time resident in that community. The Cathlamet Indians knew the area as *Tle-las-qua*, a name which the settlers in the 1840s wrote as *Tolasquah.* In 1805, Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery stopped at Knappa Point on the way to their winter encampment. Of the first farmers and loggers intending to settled here, Willard H. Rees (1846), James M. Wair (1847), Theo. Magruder (1847), and E.C. Crow (1847), Crow was the only one who stayed. He proved up on a donation land claim in this area in the 1850s, along with Jonathan Barton, John and James Brown, Samuel Tallman, Isaac Tice, and D.C. Ramey. In the1860s,when homestead land became available, settlers began arriving in the area in greater numbers. Logging camps rose, and spurred the development of local business including a private bank where the loggers could cash their checks, a general merchandise store and in 1872 a post office. Boats from Astoria brought supplies. A slip ran from the shore of the slough to a log raft so that fishermen and raftsmen could tie up their boats and pick up their supplies from the store or depot.

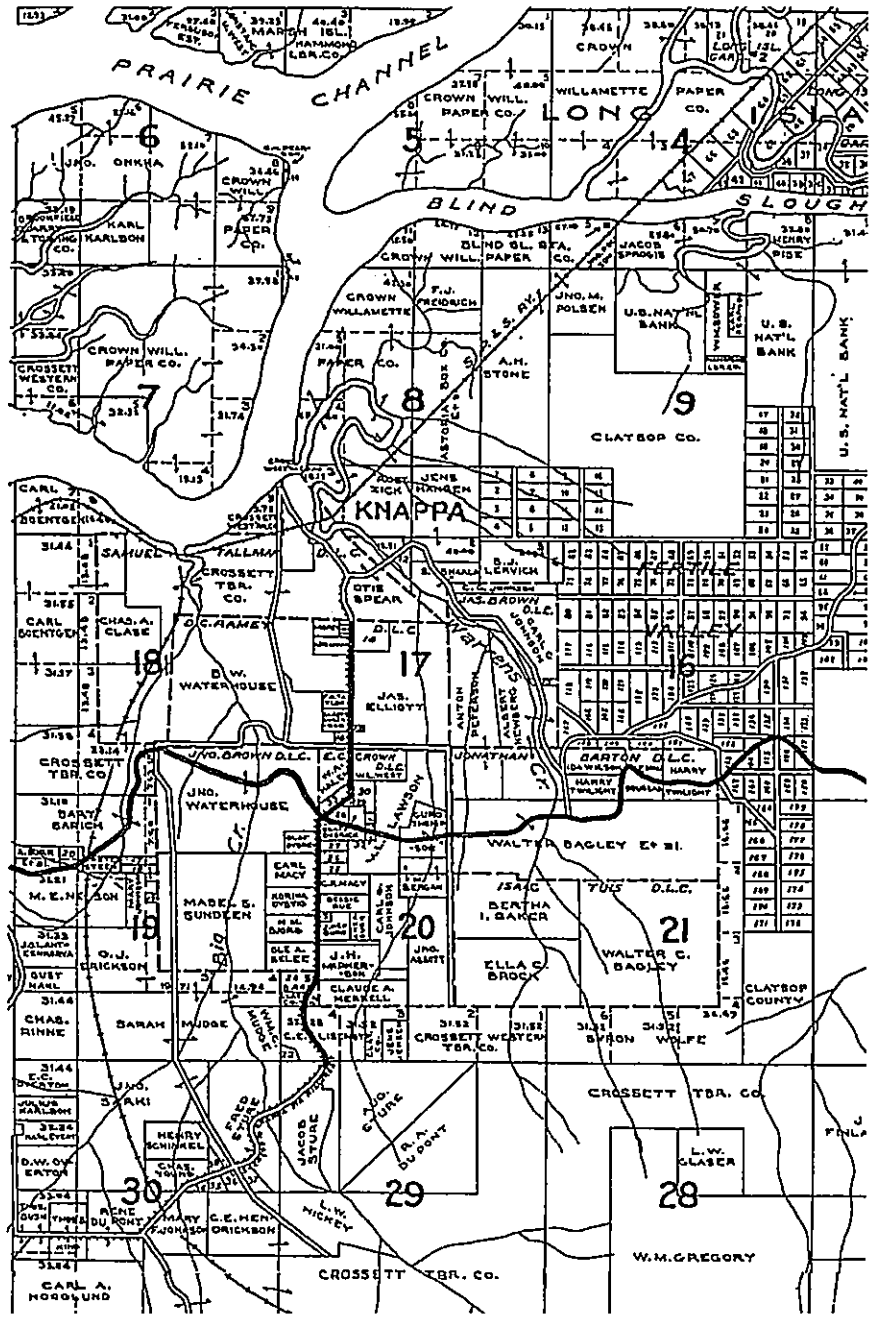
Svensen

Svensen, 12 miles east of Astoria, was named for Peter Svensen, a seafaring man, who settled nearby in 1877. According to his obituary in the *Astoria Weekly Budget*, February 8, 1911, Svensen was born in Landskrona, Sweden on July 9, 1822, and died at 88 years of age. He sailed with the crew on the packet ship *Austria* when she was destroyed by fire while en route to New York with three hundred passengers. Svensen was one of eight who were saved.

The original town of Svensen was located on the waterfront of Svensen Slough, the body of water that separates Svensen Island from the mainland. The post office was established in 1891 with Victor H. Coffey as postmaster. There was a general store on the waterfront owned first by Elmer Coe, then Bill Armstrong and later Bill Hunt Sr. Hunt moved the store up to the highway crossroads in the 1930s and his son Bernard "Tubby" Hunt still operates a store there and his daughter, Anita

Svensen and Knappa areas from the 1930 Metsker maps. Only part of each township is shown. The maps are not at exactly the same scale. The complete 1930 Metsker atlas for Clatsop County is available at the Heritage Museum Archives.





Holdridge, operates the restaurant and tavern across the road.

Transportation

Transportation in the early days was by rowboats, sailboats, and steamboats before the coming of the railroad in 1898. To reach the steamboats when the tide was out, a skiff was rowed out to meet it. There was an early military road that came out of the east end of Astoria but didn't reach the Knappa-Svensen area.

Construction of the railroad that was to run through Knappa and Svensen began in August 1895 under engineers T. H. Curtis and J. C. Jameson. The "last" spike was driven April 3, 1898, near Clatskanie and on May 16, 1898, a train made its first trip from Astoria to Portland. This was quite an event and folks from the surrounding area gathered at the depots to wave at the train as it blew its whistle at each little town.

A road from Astoria to Knappa was finally completed in 1916.

Elmer Coe and Bill Armstrong had the first car in town. A story is told that "Mr. Coe, who had but one eye, was crossing the track in his Model T. He didn't see the train coming and just had the front end off the tracks by the time the train hit. The people standing by rushed to pull the car over the track. By the time the train passed, a very frightened Mr. Coe was frozen to his steering wheel but the back end of his car was several hundred feet down the track."

Lumbering

Logging was a big industry in this area, dating back to the mid 1800s. Pioneers used ox teams and skid roads, short logs laid parallel, over which timber was "skidded," to transport the logs to streams in which they could be rafted or driven to the mills. From two to eight yoke of oxen made up the "bull teams" that were used to haul logs.

By 1900, the steam donkey was in general use throughout the county. While machinery was replacing horses and oxen in logging camps, the ever increasing distance between standing timber and the streams was intensifying the problem of transporting logs to mills. Close-in timber had been largely cut, and hauling distances were becoming too great for oxen.

The logging locomotives came in the 1880s. The first locomotives were run on wooden rails spiked to heavy timbers, and developed power from an upright steam boiler which was capable of hauling a small load of logs at about the speed of a walking horse. These inefficient locomotives were discarded in the 1890s either for used transcontinental railroad engines or later for locomotives manufactured specifically for logging railroads. By the 1910s, the hills and valleys were covered with networks of logging railroads. The Big Creek Company had a railroad that ran from Knappa up Big Creek, with spurs leading out to the logging operations on the slopes of Big Creek basin. Bear Creek in Svensen was the site of Masten's, Mooer's and Sorenson's logging operations.

D. K. Warren went into the logging business on his own, spending most of the years between 1860 and 1869 in the Knappa area. He purchased 360 acres on what was later called the Bagley and Elliot properties at Knappa, with a frontage on the Columbia River. The dock where Warren shipped and received supplies became well known to rivermen as Warren's landing. Warren went on to found the town of Warrenton west of Astoria.

Eggs and Mink

Early in the 1920s, egg production became an industry. There was no wire electricity east of Astoria and when it was found a longer day caused the hens to produce more eggs, the firm of Cook and Foster in Astoria supplied them with individual light plants. At that time a carload of eggs was shipped out weekly from the Svensen area while Bud Koppisch took a truck load into Portland daily on his express truck. (Roy Hagglund of Knappa and Barendse Express of Brownsmead also hauled farm produce to the markets.) The cooler climate of coastal areas was ideal for egg producers but after refrigeration became practical, the egg producers on the coast began to dwindle.

Mink came on the scene about 1935 and was a good business until the imported mink brought pelt prices down and the cost of raising them went up. There were some twenty mink ranches at the peak. However, there are only a few remaining today.

Agriculture and Dairying

Agriculture occupied many of the people. Knappa had a cannery that processed strawberries, beans, and apples. After dikes were constructed on tidelands, Svensen Island, Long Island (renamed Brownsmead in 1920) to the east became valuable dairy and farm land.

Many of the farmers had dairy cattle. The farmers separated the milk, hauled the cream to the depot with horse and buggy and shipped to the creamery in Astoria. The skim milk was fed to the hogs or calves.

Fishing

Fishing has been a part of the Knappa and Svensen income since the beginning of the industry. The many sloughs in the area made access to the river convenient. The sailboats of the early "butterfly fleet" were replaced in the early 1900s by the "one lunger" gasoline engines, and later by more modern V-8 high speed motors which can be found tied to docks throughout the area.

Churches

Several churches served the Knappa-Svensen area. Only three survive at present. The youngest church, which is located in Svensen, is the Crossroads Community Church founded in 1957.

On September 12, 1960, ground was broken for a new church building. Most of the labor was done by the members with much assistance from people from other Friends Churches in the Oregon Yearly Meeting of Friends. Formal dedication took place May 7, 1961. The following year an addition was built, housing the Sunday School rooms, kitchen, and fellowship hall.

The historic old Presbyterian Church in Knappa (no longer standing) served several generations of Presbyterians from the late 1800s until 1944 when it was sold to Knappa Assembly of God.

The first Assembly of God Church in the area was chartered February 22, 1944, when John R. Haynes opened Syl-

van Dale Gospel Tabernacle at Brownsmead, in the retired school building. One and a half years later, the congregation bought the property and building from the First Presbyterian Church of Knappa, moved from Brownsmead and changed the name to Knappa Gospel Tabernacle. In June 1966, the name was officially changed to Knappa Assembly of God.

This church purchased property from A. C. Dale west of Knappa crossroads between the old highway and the new one and put up a new L-shaped structure, designed by Rev. C. J. Medearis and Ken Johnson. It was built by Medearis and volunteer workers of which ninety were church members. Dedication of the new building was held on May 13, 1967.

Immanuel Lutheran Church, 3/4 miles east of Knappa crossroads, had its beginning in Brownsmead. On March 30, 1914, the Blind Slough Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Congregation was formed with services in Finnish. The services were held in the homes and in 1917, the congregation became a member of the Suomi Synod. In 1923, the congregation acquired property from Elias and Anna Michelson on which they erected a church building. This building had formerly been the old Methodist church in Lower Knappa. The Lutheran congregation took it apart to move and reassembled it on their property. In 1934, English services were instituted by Pastor Kaskinen serving the congregations from Astoria. The name was changed in 1946 to Immanuel Lutheran Church of Brownsmead, Marvin Pekkala became the first resident pastor in 1953. Several years after his arrival, the congregation purchased a bunk house from the seining grounds and floated it up Blind Slough by barge as far as it could go, the rest of the trip was over road. Mrs Dales Estoos relates, "This was most interesting because the movers ran out of daylight and had to let the building sit on the road overnight causing the traffic to go around it."

The present building was dedicated on Easter 1968 on property donated to the church by Francis and Eileen Bagley. On June 1, 2004, the church merged with the First Lutheran Church in Astoria. Members will transfer to the Astoria church or may attend one of the other Lutheran churches. It is planned to retain the Immanuel Church building as a place for Bible study and youth activities, but not for regular worship services.

Schools

In the early days, the Knappa-Svensen area was served by four elementary school districts: Svensen #22, Fairview #16, Hillcrest #31, and lower Knappa #4. In April 1936, School District #16 and School District #31, whose building had burned down the previous year, consolidated with District #4, becoming Knappa Consolidated #4. In 1947, the two elementary districts, #4 and #22 comprising the Union High School District #2 voted to consolidate.

Union High School District #2 was formed as a result of an election September 1, 1915 showing 87 voting. Of these, 67 voted for a high school, and 20 voted against it. The high school was built on the same property the present high school is on.

In 1966, School District #4 joined District 7T in Columbia County and became Columbia School District T5J.

In 1967, the four lower grades moved from the old Fairview building to the newly remodeled Hilda Lahti Elementary building.

In 1998, the Knappa district became independent of Clatskanie.

Utilities

Wickiup Water District developed in September 1936. Serving on the first board elected in 1938 were William Hunt, president; H. E. Lawrence, Secretary-Treasurer; C. G. Forrester, Fred Ward, and Alex Lindfors. Bonds were sold to finance the pipe lines serving between 32 and 38 users. New bonds were sold when the new highway went through resulting in replacing lines in that area.

Knappa Water Association incorporated in April 1966 with 69 members. A loan and F. H.A. grant were obtained later to bring water to the Aldrich Point area which was served only by private wells.

The Knappa Telephone Company, subsidiary of Telephone Utilities, started in 1955 with 348 subscribers. Subscribers used magneto crank phones until the cut over to dial system on August 12, 1957. Francis Bagley, manager, said, "It is interesting to note Knappa cut over to dial before Astoria." Before 1955, the area was served by Knappa Co-op Telephone Company, with Harold Bjorg as manager and lineman. His wife was bookkeeper and telephone operator. The first three parties to have phones were Don Overton, George Sold, and George McPherson. In 1955 Mrs. Bjorg became chief operator and was assisted by Mrs. C. G. Forrester, Mrs. Roy Hagglund, and Mrs. Ed Elliott.

The Knappa-Svensen-Brownsmead area is now served by CenturyTel.

Fire Department

In March of 1955, the fire district of Knappa-Svensen-Burnside was formed with all volunteer firemen. The first fire chiefs were: W. W. Woodworth, Bill Hunt Jr., Elmer Maki, and Elmer Ishmael. The present full-time fire chief is Paul Olheiser. The KSB fire department is a member of Mutual Aid in Clatsop County. In 1968, a memorial service was held and a marble plaque was affixed to the fire house in memory of Elmer Maki for his outstanding contribution to the department.

The KSB fire department auxiliary has been of assistance to the department by purchasing needed equipment.

Social Times and Community Spirit

Before good roads and television, the communities provided their own entertainment. Each community had a dance hall and the dances were well attended. At midnight, a sumptuous buffet was served and dancing continued until morning.

While the social life of each community today is more independent of the other, there is still a strong community spirit. Whenever a family is struck with tragedy, the communities rally to help in whatever way they can. They work together to support the athletic program of the Knappa High School, following teams to play-offs and tournaments.

Edith Cook Stangland was also the author of a story about her father, Truman Blair Cook, printed in the Winter 1996 issue of Cumtux.